Mental Health Charter
Case study
February 2016

1. **Project name:** **'Imagine Your Goals' (IYG)**

2. **Organisation name:** **Everton in the Community (official charity of Everton Football Club)**

3. **Target group:** Adults experiencing mental health problems

4. **Sean's story:**

After being sectioned under the mental health act in 2007, Sean was at the lowest point of his life. Coupled with the stigma he faced he soon **became agoraphobic** and didn't leave his home for two months. He describes this time as being a prisoner in his own mind. He was deteriorating in both mind and body whilst his **anti-psychotic medication drastically increased his appetite** and made him perennially drowsy and bereft of any sort of physical activity. This all resulted in rapid weight gain with him putting on three stone in two months. As his **weight increased, so his self-esteem plummeted.** He hated looking at his reflection in the mirror and feelings of worthlessness set in.

Sean shares his story…

I heard about mental health football sessions ran by Everton in the Community from my C.P.N. The closest session to me was a ten minute walk from where I lived, but it may as well have been a thousand miles away. I agreed to go, because I've always loved football: I scored three goals that day, worked up a sweat, got to know a couple of people, and they got to know me. They'd been through their own problems and that helped me not to feel like an 'alien'.

Over time my confidence slowly grew. I became more sociable, began to smile, lose my inhibitions. I didn't feel ashamed anymore. I had **got my freedom back**. My excess weight soon dropped off. My medication was reduced. I was sleeping better, I had something to look forward to, to get out of bed for, something worthwhile. At one point, I was **attending a football session every day of the week**. I then **started volunteering with Everton in the Community** with the delivery of the sessions and with Early Interventions Team providing peer support for all the new patients coming into the programme.

At this time I was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo surgery followed by chemotherapy. It was much easier for me going through that than it was overcoming my mental health issues. When I was better, I continued my volunteering and applied for a **work experience placement** within Everton in the Community and Mersey Care NHS Trust which allowed me to **get paid** for what I was doing, which felt great. Having confidence to play football and make new friends is one thing but having the confidence to do a job and sit in an office full of people is another when you've been away for so long.

As before, it was the feeling of wanting to get back playing football which saw me through! And if it hadn't had something to do with football I might not have wanted to come back. I'd even asked the surgeon if he could delay my operation by three days so I could play in an Everton football tournament!

Currently, I'm **still working for Everton in the Community and Mersey Care** and I'm awaiting **starting John Moores University** this September having just learned last week that I'd been accepted **to study mental health nursing**. I was in Uni many years ago. But in the last two years, I've picked up **more qualifications through Everton in the Community than at any time in my life.** This programme 'Imagine Your Goals' invests in people, both time and money and has, **inadvertently, saved my life and gave it meaning.** I have been **free from anti-psychotic medication for three years**.

My story is indeed extraordinary. It is also just one of many.